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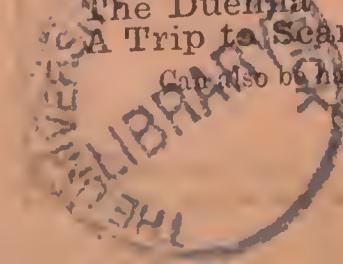
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MRS. WICKINS: Black satin, blazing turban, and a little red on her nose to give her a *spirituelle* appearance.
MISS A. J. A. WICKINS: Plain white dress.

TIME—Yesterday afternoon

SCENE.—*Mr. Wickins's drawing-room, Peckham. In centre, a small table, with chairs at each side. Sofa and other chairs to be placed round room.*

OVERTURE.

THE FIRST SYLLABLE.—**Miss.**

Enter MRS. WICKINS, in a towering passion, followed by MR. WICKINS. They come front.

Mr. W. Pray be calm, my dear!

Mrs. W. Calm, indeed! When next door, these dreadful people, these Christy Minstrels, keep strumming and yelling their wicked and profane melodies—There they go again!

(*Tremendous twanging of banjos, and singing of various popular songs, heard outside for a moment. Mrs. Wickins holds her ears.*)

Mr. W. But, my dear, I can't help it!

Mrs. W. (Scornfully). Of course not! It was not likely!

Mr. W. I can't prevent the landlord letting his house to the proprietor of an Ethiopian company. This is No. 157B, and theirs is 157A—two different houses, in fact; and, in short—

Mrs. W. In short, you're an ass, Mr. Wickins.

(*Sinks upon sofa in despair, amid another flourish of banjos.*)

Mr. W. Well, it is annoying. (Desperately.) I'll—I'll—

Mrs. W. What?

Mr. W. Write to the *Times*! There!

Mrs. W. No, you won't; and if you did, they wouldn't put it in. Ah! (sighs) my lot is cast in a valley of tribulation.

Mr. W. No; Peckham.

Mrs. W. (Severely.) Be quiet, Wickins. You have no fine feelings! You cannot understand the feelings of a mother—of a Christian mother—who has a daughter to marry, and sees a brilliant opportunity dashed to bits by these odious people in 157A!

(*Flourish of banjos outside.*)

Mr. W. I don't quite understand, my dear.

Mrs. W. Of course you don't. You never do.

Enter ARABELLA, with a book; she crosses to chair, and sits at table, without taking any notice of the others.

Perhaps you're not aware that this morning I received a letter from the Rev. Mr. Blowemup, saying that he wished to introduce to us a converted African Prince—

Mr. W. }
and } Prince!
Arab. }

(Mrs. W. rises and comes down centre. Mr. W. one side
of her, Miss W. the other.)

Mrs. W. Yes. Heir apparent to the throne of Timbuctoo, and happily converted
to Christianity by a tract which he found when hunting one day in the pathless
desert.

Mr. W. (Coughing.) Ahem!

Mrs. W. Silence. Wickins, none of those disgusting noises, please. To resume: He is now training as a missionary, and has, I believe, given up all his heathen habits.

Mr. W. But I don't see what this has to do with Miss Arabella Jane Ann Wickins?

Mrs. W. Of course you don't! It would be indeed wonderful if *your* intellect could compass the plan of making Miss Wickins a Princess!

Mr. W. Oh!

Arab. What! Marry a nigger?

Mrs. W. Nigger is not the word—Ethiopian Prince!

Arab. I don't care what the word is, the man's the same—a horrid, shiny, oozy, woolly, inky—

Mrs. W. Hold, miss! I cannot permit the royal family of Timbuctoo to be spoken of in such a string of depreciatory adjectives. Prince Burriboolah-gah is coming—
(*Crash of banjos heard.*) There! there, Mr. Wickins! It is disgraceful! A converted Prince coming, every minute now, to visit us, and to think that we are to receive him with a flourish of banjos!

Arab. (Slily.) A national welcome, perhaps?

Mrs. W. Don't be flippant, miss!

Mr. W. (Aside.) I see a storm brewing, and will get out of its way. (Aloud to Mrs. W.) My dear, I'll just slip round to 157A, and see if they won't stop that noise, to-day at least. (Going.)

Mrs. W. Do; and at once. I expect the Prince every moment.

Mr. W. (At door, aside.) Now for a glass of beer and a pipe at the Turk's Head. (Aloud.) Yes, my dear, immediately.

[Exit.—Arabella sits at table during preceding speech.

Arab. Well, 'ma, it's no use. I won't marry a black.

Mrs. W. Oh, indeed, miss!

Arab. I'd rather go in for the whole Shoe-blacking Brigade.

Mrs. W. Incorrigible girl!

Arab. Exactly. (Aside.) Oh, Orlando!

Mrs. W. (Sitting at table.) Learn the duties of a Christian English miss.

Arab. (Pettishly.) First, to marry a darky.

Mrs. W. Well, is he not, in the sublime words of Warburton, "a man and a brother?"

Arab. Yes; but Warburton didn't say he was to be "a man and a husband."

(Aside.) Oh, Orlando!

Mrs. W. He's a prince.

Arab. Well, that's something, certainly.

Mrs. W. It's a good deal.

Arab. (Reflectively.) And I might pearl-powder him. Only it would be dreadfully expensive.

Mrs. W. Then think—what would the Greens say?

Arab. Wouldn't it extinguish them?

Mrs. W. (Rising.) There spoke a Christian English miss. My maternal bosom beats with joy. (Knock heard off.) A knock! Can it be the Prince? And I'm not fit to be seen. I'll hurry my toilette; and in the meantime, you will receive him.

Arab. Yes, 'ma. (Aside.) Oh, Orlando!

Mrs. W. (Going.) Princess of Timbuctoo! Oh! it would crush these miserable Greens.

[Exit.

Arab. (*Rising.*) Now may my nerves—my courage—be equal to the occasion! I should like to have some sherry! He comes! Let me be firm!

Enter ORLANDO.

Orl. 'Tis she!

Arab. 'Tis he!

(They embrace.)

Orl. My faithful Arabella—Jane—Ann!

Arab. Alas!

Weeps.)

Orl. What is it?

Arab. They are about to give me to another!

Orl. The devil!

Arab. No, no; but much the same colour!

Orl. And you consent?

Arab. They force me, Orlando.

Orl. Then nothing remains but destruction. I will go at once, and—

Arab. What, dearest?

Orl. Invest myself in a Limited Liability Company. (Double knock heard.)

Arab. He comes—the Prince!

Orl. Ha, Prince—no matter! Farewell, false one!

Arab. Orlando! (Orlando rushes wildly off.) He is gone! The only one I ever loved! What shall I do? Ha! I have it—my back hair!

[Exit.

END OF FIRST SYLLABLE.

THE SECOND SYLLABLE.—Take.

SCENE—Same as last.

Enter Mr. SAMBO BONES.—He surveys the apartment in the approved Ethiopian walk-round style. Then sits at table.

Sam. (Speaking in the approved style of darkey slang.) Yah! By de powers, dis am a nice place—157. Let's see. (Taking letter from pocket.) I puts advertisement in de paper—first-rate real darkey, banjo, and bones. Well, letter comes. (Reads. "Sir,—I have a vacancy in my troupe at present. Call on me at 157, Paradise Oval, Peckham, and if terms suit, we'll engage. Yours, &c.") Yah! dis child am de party, and no mistake! (Sings.

"Oh, boys, carry me 'long
To old Virginny shore!"

(Laughs.) Ha, ha! Yah! dat am de real stuff.

(Whistles a break-down and walks round room. As he comes the second time past door, enter MRS. WICKINS. Collision.)

Sam. Hold up, Buffalo gal!

Mrs. W. (Aside.) The Prince! (Aloud.) Be seated, pray. (They sit at table.)

Sam. Massa ain't in, is he?

Mrs. W. No; but that is of no consequence. I need not say, both on his and my own account, how charmed we will be if you will make one of us.

Sam. All right. Golly! but dis child's in luck.

Mrs. W. I have heard, Prince, that you address the people well.

Sam. (Aside.) What she call me Prince for? (Aloud.) Address? Stump speech—Unsworth—oh, yes! Nebber fear!

Mrs. W. Unsworth! Is he evangelical? Does he wake them up?

Sam. Yes, by de powers, and so do I!

Mrs. W. Ah! we want some one who can stir not only the spirits, but also the flesh and the bones—

Sam. (Starting up.) Bones! I believe you; first bones out, I am.

(Imitates playing bones.)

Mrs. W. (Aside.) His untutored simplicity is beautiful. (*Aloud.*) I have a daughter, Prince, I wish you to know.

Sam. (Sitting—aside.) What de debbil she call me Prince for? (*Aloud.*) In de purfession?

Mrs. W. Well, she teaches in the Sunday School.

Sam. (Aside.) Dis old female mad!

Mrs. W. I am sure you will like her. Being our only child, we doat on her; and, of course (*impressively*), all her father's fortune goes to her eventually. Ahem!

Sam. (Aside.) What is she driving at? (*Aloud.*) By de way, when do we begin?

Mrs. W. (Aside.) He reads my meaning! (*Aloud.*) Oh, at once. (*Rises.*) I will send her to you immediately. And you must hear her sing, Prince, for you are of course fond of music?

Sam. Of course I am.

Mrs. W. So am I; spiritual songs are my favourites, as I've no doubt they are yours.

Sam. 'Zactly! Dis my favourite—

(*Sings.*)

Hunkey dorum, doodle dum day!

Mrs. W. (Aside.) Some wild Ethiopian psalm. Beautiful! (*Aloud.*) She will be with you in a moment.

[*Exit.*]

Sam. Yah! dat old lunatic—sure 'nuff. Can't make it out nohow. Nebber mind; if dey want dis child to marry de daughter ob de concern, I'm ready. Dat comes ob being great artist on de bones. De ladies all like de gentlemen ob colour, 'specially when we sing lub-songs in white waistcoats.

(*Sings.*)

*"I would I were a bird,
That I might fly to thee!"*

Enter ARABELLA. She pauses in amazement.

Arab. (Aside.) The Prince—as black as smut, too.

(*They bow. Sambo hands chair. They sit at table.*)

Sam. (Aside.) Golly! fine gal, any way.

Arab. (Aside.) I can't marry this coal-scuttle; I will appeal to his princely feelings. (*Aloud.*) Sir, I believe we are to have the pleasure of your acquaintance.

Sam. Yah! I'm engaged, sure 'nuff.

Arab. (Horror-struck.) Good gracious! has mamma gone so far? What fears take hold of me?

Sam. It's to come off 'mmediately.

Arab. Never! (*Aside.*) Oh, Orlando!

Sam. Why, nebber? Dis darky's got de guvnor's letter.

Arab. Papa's?

Sam. Just so. It's all right. Dere's no oder coloured pusson, is dere?

Arab. (Aside.) He suspects. (*Aloud.*) Yes, sir; there is another gentleman. (*Gushingly.*) Oh, sir, be generous—be yourself—be a prince!

(*Kneels to him. Astonishment of Mr. Bones.*)

Sam. (Aside.) Dis lunatic, too! What she call me Prince for?

Arab. (Rising.) You do not speak! You refuse my bosom's prayer! Then, farewell. You now are responsible for two lives. Ha!

[*Exits tragically.*]

Sam. Dash my wig, if I ain't frustrated—treed—row'd up salt ribber, sure 'nuff. Nice gal dat, but she had some odder chap she wants to get the place. Ha! who dat be knockin' at de door?

(*Knock heard.*)

Enter PRINCE BURRI-BOOLAH-GAH. They salute stiffly.

Prince. (Aside.) Who is this fellow? Am I forestalled?

Sam. (Aside.) Dis de odder bones! Must make him walk. (*Aloud.*) You, sar, I know what you come for! I take you, sar!

Prince. (Aside.) Can my designs on the daughter of the rich tallow-chandler have transpired? But no! (*Aloud.*) Do you, indeed?

Sam. Yes, sar ; and you come too late, sar !

Prince. Too late ?

Sam. Yah ! it's all settled ! Dis child's de man !

Prince. Never !

Sam. (Waxing hot.) What do you mean by nebber ?

Prince. It is impossible ! What, take my place ?

Sam. Impossible ! To a colour'd pusson of my talent ? You mean to insult me, sar ?

Prince. You are an impostor, sir !

Sam. (Tucking up sleeves.) Golly ! we see that bimebye ! You get out, sar !

Prince. What ! this to me, sir ?

Sam. Yes, sar ! Get out, you colour'd pusson !

Prince. You're another !

Sam. (Collaring him.) Take dat !

Prince. (Resisting.) You take that.

Sam. You no go ? Take dat !

(Grand combat of Ethiopians to music. They pull the wool out of each other's head. Shirt fronts fall on the field of battle. Ringing of bells, and noise off.)

Enter MR. and MRS. WICKINS. They shriek. Tableau.

Mrs. W. Police, police !

(Ringing of bells.)

Sam. Golly, I done it now !

Prince. (Aside) The sooner I'm off the better.

[Seizes hat, and slinks off.

Sam. (Aside.) The police come ! I'm off !

(Sings.)

"I'm off to Charlestown
Before the break ob day !"

[Exits.

Mrs. W. Oh, gracious ! what does all this mean ?

Miss W. A pretty Prince, indeed ! (Goes to window.) And there's the police and 'pa ! This comes of your fine plans !

[Exits.

Mrs. W. Oh, oh, if the constables should take us all to the station ! What would the Rev. Mr. Blowemup say ?

[Exit.

END OF SECOND SYLLABLE.

THE WHOLE WORD.—Mistake.

SCENE—Same as last.

Enter MR. WICKENS, followed by MRS. and MISS W. Mr. Wickens centre.

Mr. W. Well, my dear, this has been a pretty scandal for the neighbourhood !

Mrs. W. And whose blame was that ? You would insist upon that Prince coming bere.

(Sobs.)

Mr. W. (Feebly.) Oh, oh !

Arab. Yes, 'pa, you know you did, for he told me you wrote him.

Mr. W. Oh, oh ! Am I standing on my head or my heels ?

Mrs. W. (Severely.) It seems to me very little consequence which !

Mr. W. Anyway, the police have discovered your African Prince to be an impostor, and Arabella is saved from that, at all events.

Arab. Yes ; but alas !

(Sobs.)

Mrs. W. What is the matter now ?

Arab. My true and faithful Orlando is lost—is dead !

Enter ORLANDO.

Orl. No, my Peckham angel ! He is here to save you from perjured vows ! (Aside.) Heard that at the Victoria Theyater the other night.

Arab. Ah, 'tis heaven's will.

(They embrace.)

Orl. (To *Mrs. W.*) I can now declare my love; an unusually tough old uncle having at length consented to shuffle off the mortal coil, and leave me his heir.

Mrs. W. (Embracing him.) My dear boy!

Mr. W. But who was the other black fellow?

Enter Mr. S. BONES.

Sam. Mr. Sambo Bones, at your service, sar, and at de young lady's, sar. Mis-took de house, sar—dat was all! I've got de place all de same!

Mr. W. I'll change my number next term.

Arab. (To audience.) Thus happily ends a serious complication. May every error in your experiences have a similar result. Farewell! *(All bow)*

MISS A. W. MR. O. F. SMITH., MR. S. BONES. MRS. WICKENS. MR. WICK

END OF CHARADE.

SOLUTION.—“MISS-TAKE.”

“LOVELY.”

AN ORIGINAL DUOLOGUE, WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR
DRAWING-ROOM ACTING.
BY H. P. GRATTAN.



Nevilie.—“SEE HOW SHE LEANS HER CHEEK UPON HER HAND.”

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MR. SMILEY.

MRS. SMILEY.

HERBERT NEVILLE.

AUNT MATCHEM.

ELLEN SMILEY.

N.B.—The characters in the first part of the Charade are supposed to be about to rehearse the tragedy of “Romeo and Juliet,” and are dressed as under—

MR. SMILEY as Capulet.

HERBERT NEVILLE as Romeo.

MRS. SMILEY as Lady Capulet.

AUNT MATCHEN as the Nurse.

ELLEN SMILEY as Juliet.

“LOVELY.”

PART I.—“LOVE.”

The scene is supposed to represent a chamber in Capulet's house. MR. SMILEY, a jolly, kind-hearted, elderly gentleman, is discovered standing before a pier-glass, arranging his ruff. MRS. SMILEY, a handsome matron, is seated at a table, evidently admiring Mr. Smiley in his rich Venetian costume.

Mr. Smiley. By Jove! my dear, I don't wonder that your old masters, Messrs. Titian, Vandyk, Rubens, and Company, contrived to make their portraits so amazingly effective. I begin to think the dress was three-fourths of the battle! Let any of their celebrities exchange his plumed, jewelled and sable-furred cap, for a four-and-ninepenny billycock; his elaborately-worked lace collar and cuffs for a set of paper impositions—at one-and-three per dozen (box included); his slashed velvet doublet, embroidered cloak and trunks, for a tourists' tweed turn-out—at one-ten and a very microscopic elevenpence-halfpenny,—and I am inclined to think—whether King or Kaiser, Grandee, Noble, or Rabbi—he would cut but a very ordinary John Brown—or ditto Smith—appearance.

Mrs. Smiley. I quite agree with you, Algernon. When I see how you set off that picturesque attire, I deeply regret the bad taste of the costumers of these degenerate times.

Mr. Smiley. I join in your regrets, Mrs. Smiley—not on my own account, but solely on yours. Angelina Augnsta Matilda Marie, you look superb!

(Mrs. Smiley rises and curtseys. Mr. Smiley puts on his spectacles, and walks admiringly round her.)

Mrs. Smiley. I can return the compliment!

Mr. Smiley. (Seating himself beside Mrs. Smiley who resumes her chair.) Many thanks. But who the dence am I?

Mrs. Smiley. (Astonished.) Have you forgotten? For goodness sake, look at your part!

(Mr. Smiley takes written theatrical part from breast of vest and reads.)

Mr. Smiley. Oh, ah! I see. Capulet! Let me spell it, and I shall be more likely to remember it! (Spells.) C-A-P-U-L-E-T—Capulet!

Mrs. Smiley. That's right; pray don't forget it again. I hope you will be perfect.

Mr. Smiley. Well, yes; I think I shall. I have been hammering away at old Capulet for the last six weeks, harder than I ever did at vulgar fractions, and I think I've got most, if not all, of him into my head.

Mrs. Smiley. That's right! Only speak the words, and your success will be certain. You look the part to the life.

Mr. Smiley. I am glad to hear it; but, between you and me, I don't think I shall make much of him.

Mrs. Smiley. Why not?

Mr. Smiley. Because, my dear, he is quite out of my line.

Mrs. Smiley. How so?

Mr. Smiley. I flatter myself I am what may be called a rather more than average good-natured man; a man who can endure annoyances and unpleasantries—not to

say impositions and extortions—with commendable philosophy and praiseworthy patience. Do I ever rate the poor, water, gas, and paving rates? Do I ever anathematise the Queen's and income-tax collectors—within their hearing? I pause for a reply; and as Echo may be otherwise engaged, I will not call upon her, but furnish that reply myself—and boldly answer, "Never!"

Mrs. Smiley. You are quite right. But did *Capulet*?

Mr. Smiley. "The divine William"—as Aunt Matchem will insist upon calling the late W. S.—gives no positive particulars of *Capulet's* conduct on the trying occasions of those legal vampire's quarterly visitations; but from the very overbearing, boisterous, and, I must say,—although his representative,—inexorable manner in which he behaved to his only daughter, I am inclined to think he was anything but an enviable amiable party to his dependants or poor relations, and a positive *Ursa Major* to his duns! But, Angelina, my love, I think you will do me the justice to admit I have as little of the feminine failing—which has rendered *Mrs. Bluebeard* an object of interest—I mean curiosity—as most middle-aged gentlemen; but, I confess, I should like to know why—in the language of the divine William—I am now called upon to look "on this picture—*surveys himself in pier-glass, then turns to Mrs. Smiley*—and on this" (pointing to *Mrs. Smiley*); or, in other and plainer terms, why we are to have a full-dress rehearsal of the Balcony Scene—if not several more—this evening?

Mrs. Smiley. It is Aunt Matchem's wish.

Mr. Smiley. That I already know. What I want to be enlightened upon is, why is it Aunt Matchem's wish?

Mrs. Smiley. You are aware it has long been the dearest wish of my aunt's heart to see our Ellen married to her nephew and *protégé*, Herbert Neville.

Mr. Smiley. I am aware of that fact, and unlike old *Capulet*, I have no wish to interfere with her kind intentions—that is, on two conditions.

Mrs. Smiley. What are they?

Mr. Smiley. The first that Ellen loves him.

Mrs. Smiley. You will take my word for that.

Mr. Smiley. Decidedly. Women generally understand each other on that subject. The other is that Herbert Neville loves Ellen.

Mrs. Smiley. That is equally certain.

Mr. Smiley. Oh, indeed, has he proposed?

Mrs. Smiley. No, he has not.

Mr. Smiley. Why don't he?

Mrs. Smiley. Because he is so unaccountably shy, though he must have seen from my daughter's, and even my manner, he need have no fear of a refusal, he has never been able to summon up sufficient courage to make a formal declaration.

Mr. Smiley. That was just my case.

Mrs. Smiley. (Astonished.) Your case, Mr. Smiley.

Mr. Smiley. Yes, my dear. When I look back I am astonished, not to say disgusted with myself for the stupid manner in which I overlooked your kind advances.

Mrs. Smiley. My advances, Mr. Smiley! Why, it was twelve months before I suffered you even to squeeze my hand.

Mr. Smiley. Yes, lout that I was, because it was twelve months before I ventured to try it on, and I should not have done so even then, but for your crying out, "Don't squeeze so hard," when I hadn't the remotest thought of taking such a liberty.

Mrs. Smiley. (Laughing good-naturedly.) What an atrocious libel! Who sent the first valentine?

Mr. Smiley. I did. I think I see it now. A heart transfixed with a couple of wickedly-barbed arrows—arrows that would have let daylight through the toughest hide that ever protected a buffalo bull. I see the young person who had discharged them in an airy attire, chiefly composed of a pair of butterfly's wings, shaking his bow defiantly at another party, who appeared to be about to indulge in some culinary operation connected with the bleeding heart, preparatory to wh'c he was about to apply a blazing torch, to what I at first imagined was an economical Rumford stove; but which the young lady who supplied me with the art treasure, informed me "was the Altar of Hymen, from which the flame of connubial love would blaze through life, pure, spotless, and unsullied!"

Mrs. Smiley. (Laughing.) Well, come, that is a rather more lover-like and poetical version of Saint Valentine's allegory.

Mr. Smiley. I quite agree with you. I also vividly remember a fault you found with the church, consisting of a porch and spire, and nothing else in the way of architectural development.

Mrs. Smiley. What fault did I find?

Mr. Smiley. Why, my dear, you said it was too much in perspective, and added, for your own part you would very much prefer it in the foreground.

Mrs. Smiley. Did I say that?

Mr. Smiley. I am delighted to be enabled to assert you did, as in accordance with what I took to be a delicate hint, I proposed six months sooner than I had intended, and in consequence—

Mrs. Smiley. What, in consequence?

Mr. Smiley. I have enjoyed six months more happiness with the best of wives and women than I otherwise should have done.

(*Mr. Smiley takes Mrs. Smiley's hand, and kisses it with an air of true gallantry and devotion.*)

Mrs. Smiley. You were always a dear, good fellow, and, if possible, time has improved you.

Mr. Smiley. Seeing that he would have as vainly tried to paint the lily, or add another perfume to the rose, as improve you, he has passed you over altogether.

Mrs. Smiley. I declare you should have been Romeo.

Mr. Smiley. And you Juliet. But didn't Aunt Matchem once propose another suitor for Ellen?

Mrs. Smiley. She certainly did.

Mr. Smiley. And if I remember rightly, he, too, like Herbert Neville, was a painter.

Mrs. Smiley. He was. The objects of Aunt Matchem's idolatry are artists and the legitimate drama. The divine William's mighty masterpieces, and the *chef d'œuvres* of our modern painters.

Mr. Smiley. Conditionally, on our daughter's marrying a suitor of Aunt Matchem's selection, the old lady is to make her sole heiress to her very handsome fortune?

Mrs. Smiley. You are quite right.

Mr. Smiley. And you have consented to that arrangement?

Mrs. Smiley. I have, in your name as well as my own.

Mr. Smiley. You have my entire approval. What was Aunt Matchem's plan of operations?

Mrs. Smiley. She had two *protégés*, both giving equal promise of future excellence, and both well educated and connected. Both were engaged by her to paint Ellen's portrait, with a perfect understanding if a mutual attachment sprang up between them, the one Ellen preferred should be her husband; but an implied wish that the one who painted the best picture (for which, whether successful as a suitor or not, he was to receive the handsome sum of five thousand pounds) should prove the happy man.

Mr. Smiley. What has been the result?

Mrs. Smiley. As far as Herbert Neville goes, all we could desire. He evidently loves Ellen, and is beloved of her, and his portrait of her is said to be perfection.

Mr. Smiley. And the other gentleman?

Mrs. Smiley. Clarence Nugent.

Mr. Smiley. Oh! that's his name, is it? Well, how does he get on with Ellen?

Mrs. Smiley. Not at all. The contrast between the young men is marvellous. While Ellen was sitting to Herbert, we were struck by his earnest but respectful admiration, and his evident wish to do justice to her portrait; when with Mr. Nugent we could not help noticing his slight regard for his painting, and his self-possessed confidence in his powers of pleasing. One was evidently working to gain the hand of a girl he sincerely loved; the other appeared to imagine he could secure the love of any woman, without taking any special pains in the matter. It was quite evident, although they had been firm friends from boyhood, he deemed his modest and assiduous young rival's chances, as a suitor or an artist, worthless as compared to his own.

Mr. Smiley. A regular type of the "Veni, Vidi, Vici" fast young men of the modern school.

Mrs. Smiley. I fear so.

Mr. Smiley. Was it not stipulated, should Ellen prove indifferent to both young men, the portraits were, nevertheless, to be compared, and the award of the five thousand made to the painter of the best?

Mrs. Smiley. It was.

Mr. Smiley. When is the decision to be come to?

Mrs. Smiley. If possible, to-night.

Mr. Smiley. Is Mr. Clarence Nugent's portrait finished?

Mrs. Smiley. I cannot answer that question. We have none of us heard of him for the last six months.

Mr. Smiley. I have.

Mrs. Smiley. What?

Mr. Smiley. Nothing to his advantage; in short, I very much fear he is going to the bad; that he is more frequently seen in a stable than in a studio; that his studies of the human figure are confined to the worst description—legs, I mean *blacklegs*; that, as far as landscapes are concerned, he takes a deeper interest in the *turf* than the trees; that instead of becoming a prudent book-keeper, he has become a reckless book-maker, and that the next plunge he takes will be from the racecourse to ruin.

Mrs. Smiley. What a blessing it is our daughter was not dazzled by his superficial attractions, but has given her heart to his worthy and unassuming rival.

Mr. Smiley. A blessing, indeed; that is, if he will only screw his courage to the sticking-point, and propose.

Mrs. Smiley. Oh, never fear; leave that to— (*Aunt Matchem speaks without.*)

Aunt Matchem. What, Juliet! ladybird.

Mrs. Smiley. Aunt Matchen—and here she comes.

Enter AUNT MATCHEM, dressed as the Nurse in "Romeo and Juliet," carrying a fan and large reticule, and the usual ivory-headed crutch-stick.

Aunt Matchem. Well, my dear friends, here I am. Come, I hope to see the fictitious loves of Romeo and Juliet culminate in the proposal and acceptance of Herbert Neville and Ellen Smiley; if so, all my cares in this world will be over.

Mrs. Smiley. You forget; another important affair remains to be settled.

Aunt Matchem. What is that?

Mrs. Smiley. You have to determine which of the artists is to receive the splendid reward you have offered for the best portrait.

Aunt Matchem. That's true; and, though I should be pleased to find the successful suitor is also the best painter, that is but a secondary consideration. But see, here come the young people, looking the *fac similes* of the divine William's hero and heroine.

Enter HERBERT NEVILLE as Romeo, and ELLEN SMILEY as Juliet.

(To Ellen.) My love, you look charmingly. Mr. Neville, are you quite perfect?

Neville. I can scarcely say that; but—(looking at Ellen)—but I think I am as near perfection as a man can possibly be.

Aunt Matchem. Bravo! Well said; you improve wonderfully. The study of the divine William has given you confidence; and in this world, confidence is the best ally to secure success. How do you feel, Ellen?

Ellen. A little nervous, dear aunt; but Mr. Neville is so kind, I think I shall be able to sustain my character.

Aunt Matchem. Capital! Come, as the divine William says (though I am only here as the *Nurse*, I am up in "Hamlet,") "Give us a touch of your quality?"

Neville. Before we begin I have a favour to ask.

Aunt Matchem. What is it?

Neville. When you, dear madam, offered the very handsome amount of five thousand pounds for the best portrait of Miss Smiley, Clarence Nugent and myself made up our minds not to accept it, unless you would permit us to present you with another picture—our joint production.

Mrs. Smiley (Uneasily.) Are you still a friend of that person?

Neville. I am.

Mrs. Smiley. Do you visit him?

Neville. I do not.

Aunt Matchem. Why not?

Neville. Because I dislike some of the set I should meet with him.

Mrs. Smiley. Then you have no quarrel with him?

Neville. Certainly not. I believe he has acted foolishly; but I still admire his talent, and have every confidence in the goodness of his heart.

Mrs. Smiley. Will he compete for the prize?

Aunt Matchem. And join you in the other painting, win or lose?

Neville. Most assuredly!

Mrs. Smiley. What is to be the subject of your proposed picture?

Neville. A family of you all as you are in your present costumes, for which purpose I wish Clarence Nugent to see you in them to-night.

Aunt Matchem. I am content.

Mrs. Smiley. And I.

Mr. Smiley. And I.

Ellen. And I.

Aunt Matchem. Carried nem. con. Now to rehearse the Balcony Scene.

Mrs. Smiley. Won't that be rather difficult?

Aunt Matchem. How difficult?

Mr. Smiley. Simply because we have no balcony.

Aunt Matchem. They had none in the divine William's time, and they got on famously without. We have the same means at our disposal that the great actors of those days had, and I have come provided with them. Herbert, bring that arm-chair forward. (Neville brings down arm-chair.) Now put this placard upon it.

(Aunt Matchem takes large card out of her reticule with the words "This is a Balcony" printed on it. Neville hangs it on the chair.)

Aunt Matchem. Now Juliet, my love, seat yourself in that balcony, and let your arm hang gracefully over that balustrade.

(Ellen poses herself as desired.)

Aunt Matchem. Admirable! Nothing could be more natural. Now, Master Romeo, I want you to throw some heart and feeling into your performance. To make love—as the young men of my day did, both on and off the stage—as if they meant it. I am no admirer of the present soulless school of pensive preaching, sour looks, sallow faces, turned down collars, and moustachios, and general air of lifeless lassitude and dreamy despondency that passes muster for great acting among the professors of the not-how-to-do-it-for-fear-of-being-too-stagey—jeune premiers of the modern lavishly-upholstered pill boxes. No! let me have some of the power and passion which, in the days of Kemble, Cook, and Kean, filled old Drury from floor to ceiling, and rendered those great masters of the mighty art the idols of our ancestors and the objects of all observers.

Neville. I will do my best, madame.

Aunt Matchem. Lady Capulet, you are not on in this scene. You can go to the drawing-room, if you like.

Mrs. Smiley. Thanks. I really do want to see about the supper; so I will avail myself of your permission.

[Mrs. Smiley goes off.—Mr. Smiley is following her, when Aunt Matchem stops him.

Aunt Matchem. Where are you going?

Mr. Smiley. With Lady Capulet.

Aunt Matchem. You had better remain.

Mr. Smiley. What for?

Aunt Matchem. You will soon see. Stand there! (Places Smiley R. H. Then takes card out of bag, on which is printed "The Orchard Wall.") You are the orchard wall, that Romeo will have to come from behind. (Hangs placard round Smiley's neck.)

Mr. Smiley. All right. Now, Romeo, go off; come on, begin at once, for I am dying for a glass of sherry and a sandwich.

(Herbert goes behind Smiley, and makes his entrance à la "Romeo." Aunt Matchem stands L. H., opposite Smiley, watching and directing the performance.

Neville. "He jests at scars that never felt a wound ;
But soft—

Aunt Matchem. Oh, that will never do. Suit the action to the word, and put your hand to your head when you come to "soft ;" and then pause for a moment, and gaze intently on *Juliet*.

(*Neville does as directed.*)

Neville. "But soft,"

Aunt Matchem. Nothing could be more appropriate.

Neville. "But soft ! What light through yonder window breaks ?
It is the east, and *Juliet* is the sun !
Arise fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick, and pale with grief
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she."

Aunt Matchem. Not so bad, but a *leetle* too heavy. You must endeavour to lighten up your "east," and give more warmth to your "sun."

Neville. "See how she leans her cheek upon her hand."

Aunt Matchem. Dwell upon her "cheek."

Neville. "O that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek."

Aunt Matchem. Too tame altogether ; if you speak in that way, the audience will think, instead of wishing to be a glove—which we all know cannot cling too tightly to a lady's hand—you simply aspire to be a muff, which never squeezes it at all. Now, *Juliet*.

Ellen. That's not my cue. I have nothing to say.

Neville. "She speaks, yet she says nothing."

Aunt Matchem. Perfectly parliamentary.

Neville. "What of that ?

Her eye discourses, I will answer it."

Aunt Matchem. Remember there is a vast difference between her optic nerve and your personal pronoun. Be sure you make a distinction, and be specially careful to mind your *I*.

Neville. "I am too bold ! Oh, were those eyes in heaven !"

Aunt Matchem. Where many a man wishes his wife to be.

Neville. "They would through the airy region stream so bright,
That birds would sing, and think it was not night."

Aunt Matchem. You don't make enough of your "birds." Make a good mouthful of your "birds."

Ellen. "Ah me !"

Neville. "She speaks !

O, speak again, bright angel ! for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a winged messenger of heaven
Unto the white upturned wond'ring eyes
Of mortals, when he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds,
And sails upon the bosom of the air."

Aunt Matchem. Rather too slow. Hurry up your "messenger."

Ellen. "O Romeo, Romeo ! wherefore art thou Romeo ?

Deny thy father and refuse thy name :

Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,

And I'll no longer be a Capulet."

Neville. "Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this ?"

Ellen. "That which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet ;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title :—Romeo, doff thy name ;
And for that name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself."

Aunt Matchem. Charming ! How much better women make love than men.

Neville. "I take thee at thy word "

Aunt Matchem. Oh, nonsense; you don't half take her. Put more passion, soul, and fire into your "take."

Neville. My dear Mrs. Matchem, you make me so awfully nervous. I really think, as this is only our first rehearsal, if you would kindly leave us to ourselves, we should get on much better.

Aunt Matchem. Oh, with all my heart! Perhaps the other party is in the way?

Neville. What party?

Aunt Matchem. The party wall, of course.

Mr. Smiley. I really hope I am, for I am dying for a sandwich and a glass of sherry.

Mrs. Matchem. Are you? Come along, then.

(*Mr. Smiley and Aunt Matchem go off.*)

Ellen. Oh, I am so tired of sitting here. Can't we rehearse as well if I come to you?

Neville. Much better! I have always thought Romeo was a muff for not climbing into the balcony.

(*Ellen goes to Herbert.*)

Ellen. Need we go through the whole scene?

Neville. No, I think not.

Ellen. Then let us begin here—

"By whose direction found'st thou out this place?"

Neville. "By Love's, who first did prompt me to inquire; He lent me counsel, and I lent him eyes.

I am no pilot; yet wert thou as far

As that vast shore washed with the farthest sea.

I would adventure for such merchandise."

Ellen. "Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say—Ay!

And I will take thy word: yet, if thou swearest

Thou mayst prove false; at lovers' perjuries,

They say, Jove laughs."

Take that for your cue.

Neville. "Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear."

Ellen. "O, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon,

That monthly changes in her circled orb,

Lest that thy love prove likewise variable."

Neville. "What shall I swear by?"

Ellen. "Do not swear at all;

Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,

Which is the god of my idolatry,

And I'll believe thee."

(*Ellen involuntarily places her hand in Neville's, and looks lovingly in his face.*)

Neville. Ellen, I can endure this suspense no longer. I love you with all the truth and fervour of an honest heart; have done so for months, though till this moment I have never had the courage to tell you so. May I keep this hand?

Ellen. (Laying her head upon Neville's shoulder.) You may!

(*At this moment MR. and MRS. SMILEY and AUNT MATCHEM come on, unseen by Neville and Ellen, and range themselves at back.*)

Neville. For life?

Ellen. Yes; for life!

(*Neville kneels and kisses Ellen's hand rapturously.*)

Neville. "Oh blessed night! I am afear'd,

Being in night, all this is but a dream,

Too flattering sweet to be substantial."

Mr. Smiley. (To *Aunt Matchem*) Do you call that rehearsing?

Aunt Matchem. No, I don't. I call that—

Mr. Smiley. What?

Aunt Matchem. "Love!"

PART II.—“LY.”

CHARACTERS.

CLARENCE NUGENT.

LUCY NUGENT.

HERBERT NEVILLE.

PAGE.

SCENE.—A room in Clarence Nugent's chambers. CLARENCE NUGENT discovered seated at a table, on which a quantity of envelopes and open letters are scattered. He appears pale and dejected; but, throughout the scene, assumes a tone and manner of forced gaiety. LUCY NUGENT is seated by his side, looking anxiously in his face.

Lucy. Are you ill, Clarence?

Clarence. No, dear. Why do you ask?

Lucy. You look so pale and sad, and so unlike yourself.

Clarence. Do I?

Lucy. Yes, indeed you do.

Clarence. Your fancy, my kind little sister.

Lucy. Am I a welcome visitor, Clarence?

Clarence. Welcome, dear one! How can you ask such a question?

Lucy. Because, when I came in, you seemed more surprised than pleased.

Clarence. Surely there is nothing very strange in that. It is natural I should show some surprise at the sudden appearance of a young lady I thought was a hundred miles off.

Lucy. Perhaps so for the first few minutes; but for the last half-hour your manner has been so cold and constrained; and you look so unlike yourself; I am sure you must be suffering from some severe illness or sudden misfortune.

Clarence. Indeed, you are wrong, Lucy.

Lucy. I am not. Look in my face. Clarence, you are deceiving me!—deceiving the sister who would freely lay down her life to preserve your honour or ensure your happiness.

Clarence. What strange fancy have you in that pretty little head of yours? “Preserve my honour!” “Secure my happiness!” Do you imagine either are in jeopardy?

Lucy. I do.

Clarence. You are my only sister; have ever proved yourself a loving, gentle, and true one; but these suspicions—

Lucy. Are, I fear, too well founded.

Clarence. (With affected gaiety.) Why, my dear, you are becoming more and more oracular and mysterious. What possible ground can you have for such sombre fancies?

Lucy. Stronger ones than you at present imagine.

Clarence. May I be made acquainted with them?

Lucy. Certainly. It will be painful to reveal them; but it is a duty I owe to you and myself.

Clarence. A duty to yourself?

Lucy. No stain can fall on your good name that will not sully mine.

Clarence. Lucy, you are torturing me! If you love me, speak out at once, and speak plainly. What do you mean?

Lucy. This is not a voluntary visit.

Clarence. Not voluntary?

Lucy. No. I felt compelled to come!

Clarence. Compelled? By whom?

Lucy. Of that presently. May I, presuming on a sister's love, ask you a few questions?

Clarence. (Aside, uneasily.) Can she suspect? (To Lucy, with affected gaiety) Certainly. From your manner, I fancy they are of the most momentous importance, and I promise, even should they relate to the all-engrossing topics of the morals of the last lady's novel, the music of the last new opera, or the fashion of the last new bonnet, I will enlighten you to the very best of my limited abilities; or, like a melo-

dramatic rusher to the rescue of any other distressed damsel—"Perish in the attempt."

Lucy. Have you seen Mr. Herbert Neville lately?

Clarence. Not very.

Lucy. How long since?

Clarence. Six or seven months.

Lucy. Have you quarrelled with him?

Clarence. Certainly not.

Lucy. Were you not rivals for the same lady's hand?

Clarence. Partially so. It was a romantic affair, got up by a very rich and eccentric old maid—a liberal patroness of both of us. We were engaged by her, each to paint a portrait of her reputed heiress, a very charming girl, and it was tacitly understood if Miss Smiley thought proper to fall head over ears in love with either of us, and the passion proved reciprocal, there would be no obstacle thrown in the way of the happy man's proposals being accepted.

Lucy. Have you finished your portrait?

Clarence. I am ashamed to say not quite.

Lucy. How has that happened?

Clarence. Business, or pleasure, called me from London on one or two occasions, when I forgot appointments had been made for sittings; and, I presume, the lady, in consequence of my apparent neglect, took some slight offence, as she ceased to call at my studio.

Lucy. How long has she discontinued her visits?

Clarence. Some months.

Lucy. Did Mr. Neville cease to call at the same time?

Clarence. Oh, dear, no! He was with me daily as usual for some weeks after Miss Smiley continued her sittings.

Lucy. Why did your intimacy with Mr. Neville cease?

Clarence. He is a strange fellow, in some things, and though good as gold at heart, has some peculiarly stiff-necked notions. I had made the acquaintance of some fashionable men; they were what he called too fast for him, and he was too slow for them. He evidently saw they considered him a bore; and so—

Lucy. He gave up your acquaintance rather than continue theirs.

Clarence. Yes—that is, I suppose so.

Lucy. I honour him for it.

Clarence. Honour him, Lucy?

Lucy. Yes, honour him! Was there one Captain Gaston Leech among them?

Clarence. (Surprised). There was.

Lucy. Would you know his handwriting?

Clarence. As well as my own.

Lucy. (Producing letter, and showing it to Clarence.) Is that it?

Clarence. (Looks at letter, appears astounded.) It is.

Lucy. Shall I read it to you?

Clarence. (With an effort.) If you please.

(*Lucy opens letter, and reads.*)

"MADAM,

"I trust you will excuse the liberty I, a perfect stranger, take in addressing you. But the interest I feel in your misguided brother's affairs compel me to do so. That rash young man, contrary to my advice—indeed, I may say entreaties—has given way to his mad infatuation for the worst and most seductive species of gambling—betting on the turf, till he is on the verge of utter ruin; unless some means are supplied him to meet his heavy losses before the next settling day, he will become an outcast from the society of all honorable men, and be classed with the miserably disgraced vagabonds known as defaulters, welshers, and swindlers.

(Signed)

"GASTON LEECH."

Clarence (*Overcome by surprise and indignation*). Lost—lost! Ruined, betrayed, and abandoned by the heartless scoundrel who has lured me on to destruction! But stay, I may be deceived! He promised to bet a thousand for me at such odds on the certain winner of to-day's race, as will recomp all my losses; the issue will be known shortly, and till then I will not despair.

Lucy. Do not buoy yourself up with false hopes ; their failure will make your disappointment the keener. Little as I know of the world, I feel confident you are the dupe of a consummate soundrel ! That letter carries conviction on its face. Make up your mind for the worst, and meet it like a man. What will it be ?

Clarence. Ruin—irretrievable ruin ! and, what is worse, dishonour and disgrace !

Lucy. My darling brother, what you call ruin is but a name, if you mean by that the loss of your and my own moderate fortune. With youth, health, strength, and honest resolution, there is no pecuniary loss that may not be made up by persevering and cheerful industry. I have come here not to add to your sufferings, but to share them—not to blame you for your misfortune, but to place my fortune at your disposal. It will relieve you from your present embarrassments, and leave us both free to work together, with heaven's assistance for our future subsistence.

Clarence. My dear, dear sister, I have no words to speak my thanks, my love, my gratitude. But do not suppose I am so utterly degraded and lost to every manly feeling as to touch one penny of your money, or that you shall ever be disgraced by the presence of a pauper brother. I can realize enough by the sale of all I possess to pay these harpies ; that done, even if I have to work my passage, I will make my way to Australia, where I will endeavour to redeem my losses ; or, should I fail in that, die, if unknown and unwept, neither dishonoured nor despised.

Lucy. Brother, where you go I go. Whatever your fate, I share it with you.

(Embraces Clarence.)
(Embrace.)

Clarence. My own dear, dear sister.

(Postman's knock outside. Enter PAGE with telegram, which he hands to Clarence.)

Page. Telegram for you, sir.

(Clarence takes it.)
[Page exits.]

(Clarence holds telegram in his hand, as if dreading to open it. Lucy takes it gently from him.)

Lucy. Let me read it, Clarence.

Clarence. Yes, Lucy ; ruin will come less harshly from your kind voice.

(Lucy opens telegram, and, with an effort, restrains her feelings, and reads in a composed voice :—

“ Newmarket, Monday, 3 o'clock p.m.

“ Leech to Nugent.

“ All up ; Thunderbolt scratched ; get ready for settling. I am a heavy loser, and must be paid.”

(Lucy hands telegram to Clarence ; he takes it mechanically, places it on the table before him, and gazes vacantly at it as he sinks into his chair. Lucy places her hand kindly on his shoulder. Double knock at the street door.)

Enter PAGE with card on salver. Offers card to Clarence.

Page. Gentleman wishes particularly to see you, sir.

(Clarence pays no attention, but still keeps his eyes fixed on the telegram.)

Lucy. Give me the card.

(Page hands card to Lucy, who reads it.)

Lucy. “ Mr. Herbert Neville.” This is fortunate. (To Clarence.) Your friend, Mr. Herbert Neville, wishes to see you. (To page.) Show the gentleman up.

[Exit Page.]

Clarence (suddenly starting up). No, no ; say I am engaged. I will see no one.

Lucy. You are wrong, dear Clarence ; Mr. Herbert Neville has always been your attached friend. He is a man in whom you can confide, and if anyone ever wanted the advice of such a man, you do now.

Clarence (bitterly). You are right ; the sooner my humiliation begins the better.

Enter HERBERT NEVILLE. He shakes Clarence's hand warmly ; then, seeing Lucy, bows respectfully to her.

Herbert. How are you, old fellow ? I am delighted to see you I beg your pardon, I did not perceive there was a stranger here.

Clarence. No stranger ; my only sister, Mr. Neville—Miss Nugent.

(Neville and Miss Nugent acknowledge the introduction.)

Neville. Delighted to have the honour of making Miss Nugent's acquaintance.

Lucy. No more than I am to meet so true a friend of my brother's.

Neville. Yes, Miss Nugent; Clarence and I have known each other from boyhood, and I am happy to say, up to the present time, we have never exchanged an angry word. But I say, Clarence, what the deuce is the matter with you? You look about as cheerful as if you had won a Chancery suit, and made the pleasant discovery the estates were swallowed up in payment of costs. Do get out of the dismals; I want you to be especially jolly to-day, for I have come to ask your congratulations, and, as Aunt Matchem would say, in the language of the divine William, tell you I am the Jason, I have won the fleece, and am about to become a Benedict. Miss Smiley has consented to become Mrs. Neville.

Clarence. I sincerely congratulate you.

(Shakes hands with Neville.)

Lucy. And so do I, Mr. Neville.

Neville. Thank you both very much. I assure you I shall be most ready to return the compliment, though I hope in a more cheerful manner than my friend Clarence. Now I look at you again, you are pale and agitated, my dear old fellow. You know me well enough to be aware I do not ask out of mere idle curiosity, let me entreat you to tell me what is the matter?

Clarence. One word will do that.

Neville. One word.

Clarence. Yes, one short word—ruin!

Neville (Shocked and surprised). Ruin?

Clarence. Yes, complete, overwhelming ruin.

Neville. I am so surprised, grieved, I scarcely know what to say. May I ask the cause?

Clarence. My own mad folly, bad counsel, and the Turf.

Neville. The Turf! I feared this! Have I not warned you against this infatuation?

Clarence. You have; but is this a time for a friend to add to my misery, by pointing out that I might, had I listened to him, have avoided my past folly—my present degradation?

Neville. No, Clarence, it is not; and I hope I am the last man in the world to cover the shaft of malice with the flimsy disguise of affected sympathy. When I said I had warned you, I did not mean against yourself, but against a man I had every reason to believe was a most consummate swindler and heartless scoundrel. I mean Captain Gaston Leech. Am I right when I suppose he is at the bottom of your present difficulties?

Clarence. You are perfectly right.

Neville. Hurrah! I am glad to hear it.

Clarence. Glad?

Neville. Yes, absolutely delighted.

Lucy. Delighted, and why?

Neville. Because I can be of essential service to your brother, and place that scoundrel before the world in his proper colours.

Clarence. (Eagerly.) How so?

Neville. I know the rascal's entire history. I have made it my business for the last eight months to trace out his career, with the sole view of opening your eyes to the character of a swindler you looked upon as a gentleman, and treated as a friend.

Clarence. May I know the result of your inquiries?

Neville. Certainly. At school he was a bully and a braggart; at college an idleton and lounger; he left, after being rusticated, and never returned. Through some parliamentary interest, he obtained a commission in the army. He was, you know, a dashing-looking fellow, and, for a time, gave fair promise of becoming a good officer; but the cloven foot was soon shown. It was observed that his chief associates were the youngest men in the regiment, and that he was very assiduous in cultivating the acquaintance of all new-comers, who were always warmly welcomed and handsomely entertained at his quarters. Rumours of high play got wind. Leech obtained his captaincy by purchase, and lived in a style far beyond what his pay and very moderate allowance would have justified. Men of

much larger means who associated with him, became inevitably involved with money-lenders, and that peculiar class of harpies who are ever ready to pander to the extravagancies, follies, and views of the young and inexperienced, as their purses become empty Leech's appeared to become full. His success at all games of cards became a proverb; but he went too far at last. Some very questionable transaction which took place in the Captain's quarters, by which he was said to be great gainer, came to the ears of the commanding officer, and Leech, instead of being cashiered as he richly deserved, was advised to sell out, which he did without loss of time, and soon after became ostensibly what he had long been covertly—a reckless, desperate, and unprincipled blackleg and gambler. As before, his selected victims are invariably young men of means, whom he dazzles by his military bearing, and attracts by his air of kindly and condescending patronage, as, excuse me for saying so, I believe he did you.

Clarence. I confess it.

Neville. Having secured the confidence of his dupes, his general mode of operation was, under a sacred promise of inviolable secrecy, to let them into some awfully good thing on the next race, offer to invest their money at tremendous odds, put the amounts entrusted to him in his pocket, and when the race was over give them the name of the second or third horse as the good thing he had backed, and rail at the accident by which he was beaten by a short head, a neck, or a length, as the case might be. Am I right?

Clarence. That was the precise plan he pursued with me.

Neville. What was the last "moral" he urged you to invest upon?

Clarence. Thunderbolt.

Neville. How much?

Clarence. A thousand.

Neville. And the odds?

Clarence. Five to one, and he said he would make the bet for me.

Neville. Did he do so?

Clarence. Yes.

Neville. The scoundrel! When?

Clarence. Here is the telegram—yesterday, at three o'clock.

Neville. Let me see it.

(Clarence hands Neville telegram. He looks at it eagerly.)

Neville. This is superb!—beautiful!—magnificent! This is all I wanted to prove the thorough rascality of this bare-faced and heartless scoundrel. Clarence, you need not pay this bet, at any rate.

Clarence. Why not?

Neville, Thunderbolt was scratched at six o'clock the evening before the day on which he telegraphs to you he has made the bet on your account.

Clarence. Are you certain?

Neville. Quite. I have a document in my pocket which will prove the truth of my assertion.

Clarence. Who from?

Neville. A friend of mine on the turf.

Clarence. Are you then a betting man?

Neville. Decidedly not. I despise the name and the avocation. Pardon me, Clarence; I don't mean to reflect on you; indeed, it has been for your sake I have kept up a correspondence in which I should otherwise have felt repugnance, rather than taken interest.

Lucy. Pray, sir, explain yourself.

Neville. Willingly, my dear Miss Nugent. You must know, some years ago, a little fellow, who used to groom my pony when I was a boy, left my father's service to go into a racing stable. He was a shrewd urchin enough—what, in slang parlance, is called a "remarkably wide-awake little party." He got on pretty well; but his mother, a poor widow, who used to support herself by doing odd jobs for families in the village, met with an accident which disabled her for a long time. I heard, by chance, a distress warrant had been put into the poor soul's house. It was but for a trifle; so out of regard for Master Tim, I paid it out. It seems this service done his mother made a deep impression on the boy's mind. I met him accidentally, the first time you visited Epsom, in company with Captain Leech. He

recognised me at once, and having seen me in conversation with you, concluded you were a friend of mine. While you were engaged with Leech, he called me on one side, and told me, in confidence, to keep an eye on that gentleman, as, in his somewhat turf'y phraseology, "he was nothing more nor less 'than a gilt-headed mace.'" From that time I kept a constant watch on Leech, and a constant correspondence with Tim, from whom I heard of the Captain's operations on Thunderbolt, who was never intended by his party to win. Here is Tim's epistle. The matter must excuse the manner.

(*Takes dirty letter from pocket and reads.*)

"HON'R'D SUR,—

"The game's hup—the horse is scrat. The Captain is 'eavy hon 'im. Walker! and Kumpany!—and means to make a pot, an' put his frens in the 'ole. Time, 6 o'clock, Tuesday hevening, p.m.

"THE FLY ON THE WALL."

Lucy. This is, indeed, glorious news.

Clarence. My preserver, how can I prove my gratitude?

Neville. By promising to do all I ask for the next three days at least.

Clarence. With all heart.

Neville. Then take up your pen, and write to Captain Leech as I dictate.

(*Clarence prepares to write.*)

"SIR,—

"Your letter to my sister was premature. It was sent as much too soon, as I am happy—from the enclosed communication—to find, your intention of backing Thunderbolt on my account was too late.

"I wish you to understand very distinctly, our intercourse and acquaintance must cease. It rests with yourself as to whether my reasons for coming to this determination is to be made public.

"CLARENCE NUGENT.

"To Captain Gaston Leech."

(*Clarence hands letter to Neville, who reads it, and then encloses Tim's letter in it.*)

Neville. Now put that in an envelope, direct and post it as soon as possible.

(*Neville sits down and writes, encloses note in envelope, and addresses it. Clarence directs his letter to Leech; then touches the bell.*)

Enter PAGE.

Clarence. Post this at once.

Page. Yes, sir.

Neville. Will you allow the boy to deliver this as directed?

Clarence. Certainly. (*Neville gives Page letter he has been writing.*) Make haste, my man; the letter is important, and time is a great object.

Page. I'll run all the way, sir.

[*Exit Page.*

Neville. Now, once more, and I hope for the last time, to our unpleasant business. Are your other debts of honour heavy?

Clarence. They are.

Neville. Can you meet them?

Clarence. Yes.

Neville. Without inconvenience?

Clarence. No; they will make a poor man of me for many a day.

Neville. Do they amount to hundreds or thousands?

Clarence. Only hundreds.

Lucy. Thank heaven, I can pay them!

Neville. No necessity. Your brother can do that without the slightest assistance.

Clarence. How?

Neville. You shall know all in good time. You have obeyed my first command by writing to the Captain; my second is that you present yourself at the Smileys in half an hour, to compete for the prize.

Clarence. It would be useless ; my portrait won't be there.

Neville. You are wrong. I have just sent an order by your page to the man at your studio to pack it carefully and send it instantly.

Lucy. Oh, Mr. Neville, how truly generous, thoughtful, and considerate you are !

Neville. Pray, don't, Miss Nugent. I am a modest young man, and you make me blush.

Clarence. Even if it is there, I shall have no—

Neville. That is not the subject under discussion. Will you keep your word to me ?

Clarence. With the certainty of defeat, and at any sacrifice of self-love—yes !

Neville. That's a good fellow ! I must go from command to entreaty. Will you, as the very greatest favour you can confer upon me, bring Miss Nugent with you, and allow me to have the pleasure of introducing her to my intended wife ?

Clarence. Lucy, give your own answer.

Lucy. I will come, with the most sincere pleasure.

Neville. A thousand thanks ! Clarence, take care of this precious document—(holding out telegram)—your friend, the Captain, has made a singular, verbal error. (Reading telegram.)

Clarence. What is it ?

Neville. He says he will *lay* the odds. He ought to have used another word of nearly the same meaning.

Clarence. What word ?

Neville. Lie !

Clarence. Lie !

Lucy. Lie !

Neville (Tapping telegram.) Yes, Miss Nugent, "Lie!"

CLOSED IN BY CURTAIN.

CLARENCE.

LUCY.

NEVILLE.

END OF PART SECOND.

PART III.—**Lovely.**

SCENE.—*Same as Scene 1st.*

ELLEN SMILEY discovered, still in her Juliet's costume. She is reading a note.

Ellen. This appears to me a most extraordinary request on the part of Herbert. (Reads.)

"**MY OWN LOVE,**—

" You will confer a great favour on me, and be the means of securing the peace of mind and happiness of a really good fellow, and a most amiable young lady—his only sister—by placing these envelopes on the two pictures that are to be decided on this evening. I also specially request you, when the decision is given, to open the envelope on the selected portrait, and make known the name of the fortunate competitor.

" I trust the fiat will have gone forth before the advent of Clarence Nugent and his sister, whom I have invited to be introduced to you, in the sincere hope she may become one of your bridesmaids and future friends.

" Yours ever, devotedly,

" HERBERT NEVILLE."

Ellen. I have done as Herbert wished. I could not resist the temptation of just taking one peep under the covering ! I wonder which Herbert painted—they are both so much alike, I could not decide. Whichever is his I am sure to think the best, whatever papa, mamma, and Aunt Matchem may determine. I am delighted to hear Mr. Nugent is really a very good fellow, and not, as papa thought, gone to the bad ; and it will give me great pleasure to be introduced to the sister of any friends of Herbert's.

Enter MR. SMILEY, MRS. SMILEY, and AUNT MATCHEM.

Mr. Smiley. They are admirable!

Mrs. Smiley. They are, indeed!

Aunt Matchem. They do infinite credit to both my *protégés*! (To Ellen.) Go and look at them, my dear, and let us have your candid opinion.

Ellen. Certainly, aunt.

[Ellen goes off.

Mrs. Smiley. (To Aunt Matchem.) Which do you prefer?

Aunt Matchem. It is really difficult to say, but I have a choice.

Mr. Smiley. And so have I.

Mrs. Smiley. And I.

Aunt Matchem. As the expression of an opinion by either of us, might possibly influence the judgment of the rest, I propose we write down our respective selections, unknown to each other, and let the majority decide the question.

Mr. Smiley. Agreed!

Mrs. Smiley. Admirable!

(Mr. Smiley, Mrs. Smiley, and Aunt Matchem go to table, and write a line on a sheet of note-paper, which they fold up.)

Aunt Matchem. (Coming forward.) Now let Ellen read the votes, "big with the fate of Cato and of Rome." (Calls off, "Ellen.")

Enter ELLEN.

Ellen. Here I am, aunt.

Aunt Matchem. Write down on a slip of paper the description of the portrait you prefer.

Ellen. The description, aunt?

Aunt Matchem. Yes, a line will do—simply, the Blush Rose, or the Orange Blossom.

(Ellen goes to table and writes.)

(Comes down and gives her paper to Aunt Matchem; Mr. Smiley and Mrs. Smiley do the same. Aunt Matchem puts up double eyeglass, unfolds, and reads them.)

Aunt Matchem. No. 1. Blush rose. (Hands paper to Ellen.) No. 2. Blush rose. (Hands paper to Ellen.) No. 3. Blush rose. (Hands paper to Ellen.) No. 4. Blush rose. (Hands paper to Ellen.) I declare, for once, the art critics are unanimous! After that, we may well say wonders will never cease! All we want to know now is the name of the successful candidate. Ellen, bring the sealed envelope from the portrait.

Ellen. Yes, aunt.

[Ellen goes off.

Mr. Smiley. I am not a sporting man, and rarely bet, but I'll lay the odds in gloves—two dozen to one, with both you ladies, it is Herbert Neville's portrait.

Mrs. Smiley. That is the bet I should like to make.

Aunt Matchem. And I.

Enter ELLEN.

Ellen. And I. Here is the envelope.

(Gives envelope to Aunt Matchem, who breaks the seal and reads the name.)

Aunt Matchem. And you would have all—

Mr. Smiley. Won?

Mrs. Smiley. Won?

Ellen. Won?

Aunt Matchem. No—lost! The name is Clarence Nugent!

Enter HERBERT NEVILLE, CLARENCE NUGENT and LUCY NUGENT.

Herbert. Hurrah! Capital—excellent! We have arrived just in the nick of time to hear glorious news! Clarence, my dear old friend, from the very bottom of my heart I congratulate you.

Aunt Matchem. And so do I!

Mrs. Smiley. And I!

Ellen. And I!

Mr. Smiley. (Shaking hands warmly with Clarence, who appears overcome with surprise.) And I!

Lucy. And oh! my dear, dear brother, so do I.

Ellen. This is the young lady you wrote to me about?

Herbert. It is.

Ellen. Papa, mamma, and dear Aunt Matchem, Mr. Clarence Nugent's only sister, and, with your permission, my bridesmaid and future friend.

(*All welcome Lucy.*)

Aunt Matchem. I'll answer for all—delighted to make Miss Nugent's acquaintance. (To Clarence.) You won the prize nobly, sir; but I cannot help saying, with the divine William—

“Oh, day and night, but this is wond'rous strange.”

Herbert. Let me avail myself of the divine William's words, and continue—

“And therefore, as a stranger, give it welcome,
There are more things in heaven and earth,
Aunt Matchem (that is, Horatio), than are
Dreamed of in your philosophy!”

Aunt Matchem. Very good, indeed! if you had given a little more warmth to your “welcome,” and a little more tone to your “philosophy,” that quotation would have been very fairly rendered. But how is this, Mr. Nugent? You have reversed the old fable of the hare and the tortoise. While we thought you were amusing yourself anywhere but in your studio, you have outpaced our steady friend, and won the prize?

Herbert. Simply poetical justice, dear Mrs. Matchem. If fate destined me to be the fortunate possessor of the beautiful original, Clarence well deserves the prize for his splendid copy.

Mrs. Smiley. You are right, Mr. Nugent, I have to ask your pardon.

Clarence. What for?

Mr. Smiley. I have done you an unintentional wrong. I listened to some ill-natured aspersions on your character, and allowed them to prejudice my mind against you. Will you forgive me?

Clarence. I have nothing to forgive anyone here for. I am surrounded by the best friends that ever came to win a man from disgrace and misery. I should little deserve your friendship did I suffer a feeling of false shame, or false pride, to induce me to present myself to you as a worthless hypocrite. The reports you heard were substantially correct. I, who up to the present time had been a dupe, might, by the force of circumstances, but for the kindly advice of my friend Neville, have degenerated into a swindler. His counsel, and a sister's love, have opened my eyes to my past folly and madness, and I trust the lesson I have learnt is one that will stand me in good stead for the rest of my life. Having made my candid confession, may I still consider you as friends?

Aunt Matchem. I'll be spokesman—that is, spokeswoman—and answer for the party; and my answer is this: your manly admission of your youthful follies or—well, I won't mince the matter—faults, has convinced us of the sincerity of your regret for the past, the honesty of your resolution to reform in the future.

Clarence. A thousand thanks! Now, may I ask confession for confession?

Aunt Matchem. What on earth do you mean?

Clarence. I have been awarded the prize.

Aunt Matchem. You have.

Clarence. Fairly?

Aunt Matchem. Fairly! yes, fairly. What can you mean by such a question? Fairly and unanimously!

Clarence. Was Herbert Neville present?

Aunt Matchem. As far as we know, not within ten miles of the place.

Clarence. Then he used no kind but undue influence in my favour?

Aunt Matchem. Certainly not. We did not know until our minds were made up which of you had painted the successful portrait; then, and not till then, we opened the sealed envelope fixed to the frame, and found your picture was the one we all preferred. And, do you know—though I own I must confess I was a little disappointed at first

—I am now very glad you were the successful party, as it will give you time to commence the family group of Mr. and Mrs. Smiley, Ellen, and your humble servant, while the bride and bridegroom are absent for their honeymoon trip.

Mr. Smiley. A capital idea. I am getting quite used to this sort of costume, and I shall be delighted to be handed down to posterity as a "Venetian nobleman" and family. You can make me as much like a Doge, and as little like that old pump, Don Capulet, as you think proper.

Aunt Matchem. Nothing of the sort, Mr. Nugent. As the divine William says, "Hold the mirror up to nature," and when it comes to my turn as the *Nurse*, make me as much like the old representatives of the character, and as little like the modern ones, as you possibly can; and in return, as when I have lost Ellen I shall be left entirely alone and unprotected, I will beg the favour of your charming little sister, who appears to be new to London, paying me a visit, taking me round to see the sights, and chaperoning me to the opera. What do you say, fair lady?

Lucy. I shall be happy to accept your kind and generous invitation.

Mrs. Matchem. That's right. I don't think there is any fear of backsliding on the part of your talented brother; but I am quite certain the sight of your sweet face in his studio occasionally will render it more pleasant than anything else in the world. Now, as it is probable you young gentlemen have something to say to each other, and as your sister has not seen your splendid portrait, we will adjourn to look at it again; and, as the divine William says, will once more "Our judgment join in censure of its seeming." Come, good people!

[Takes *Lucy's* hand, and goes off with *Mr. and Mrs. Smiley and Ellen.*]

Clarence. What a dear, considerate old soul Aunt Matchem is; I never gave her credit for having half so much feeling. I shall literally love her for ever for giving me this opportunity of relieving my heart of some of its weight of obligation, and telling you, dear old fellow, how deeply, gratefully, and sincerely I thank you.

(Shakes hands with *Herbert.*)

Herbert. For what? A few words of honest advice, which would have had no possible result but for the good sense that prompted you to listen to them! I see very little to be grateful for in that.

Clarence. I do! But I do not allude to that now—although, but for your good advice, I should neither have sent my portrait or presented myself. *Herbert*, I feel satisfied I owe my unexpected good fortune to you, and not to my own merits!

Herbert. Nonsense—nonsense!

Clarence. Your portrait has all the charm of an elaborately-finished work; mine is, at best, but a hastily-executed—though, perhaps, life-like and spirited—sketch.

Herbert. You overrate me, and do *yourself* an injustice.

Clarence. Neither the one nor the other!

Herbert. Well, my dear fellow, you are in a glorious minority; all the family, including Aunt Matchem, decide differently.

Clarence. I can't make it out! I scarcely believe it is possible or real!

Enter *ELLEN* with letter, which she gives to *Clarence.*

Ellen. From Aunt Matchem, Mr. Nugent.

Clarence. (Taking letter.) Will you pardon me?

Ellen. Certainly—

(*Clarence goes up to table, sits down, and opens and reads letter.*)

And here is a queer-looking epistle for you, *Herbert.*

(*Gives him dirty note.*)

Herbert. Where did this come from?

Ellen. The servant says a shabby-looking little fellow left it at the door, and hurried away as fast as his legs would carry him. You can read it presently. I have someth'g particular to say to you.

Herbert. Indeed!

(*They come down from Clarence, who is reading his letter, and speak so as not to be overheard by Clarence.*)

Ellen. Yes; there must be some mistake about the portraits.

Herbert. Mistake! Speak low, and explain yourself.

Ellen. You know there was an envelope on each of them supposed to contain, the one your name, the other Mr. Clarence Nugent's?

Herbert. Certainly.

Ellen. Well, thinking I should like to have your autograph, I took the envelope from the portrait, and found, instead of yours, Mr. Clarence Nugent's name written on that as well as *the other*.

Herbert. (*Anxiously.*) You have not mentioned this to any one?

Ellen. Not a soul.

Herbert. Promise me you won't.

Ellen. Why not? there is some deception.

Herbert. There is, and I am its author.

Ellen. (*Astonished.*) You! Mr. Neville.

Herbert. Yes; listen to me, before you condemn me. The sum offered by your aunt for the best portrait will save Clarence Nugent and his orphan sister from absolute ruin, brought on him by a set of unprincipled sharpers, in whose honour and good faith he foolishly confided. To secure him that sum, I myself placed his name on both the pictures, meaning to remove that on the rejected portrait and substitute my own, as I am perfectly satisfied he is far too proud and sensitive to accept money, however great his necessity, he had not earned, and had no chance of repaying. Do you blame me?

Ellen. No, I do not; you are a dear, good fellow; and the nobleness and generosity of the motive more than atones for the trifling duplicity.

Herbert. Thank you, pet! What have you done with the card?

Ellen. (*Producing envelope with card similar to the one opened by Aunt Matchem.*) It is here!

Herbert. Give it to me, and I will destroy it. (*Takes envelope from Ellen.*) And now remember this our first, and, I hope, last secret, must be sacredly kept.

Ellen. It shall never pass my lips.

(*Aunt Matchem calls without.*)

Ellen. Coming, aunt.

Herbert. Remember!

Ellen. Rely upon me.

[*Ellen goes off.*

Herbert. (*Opens note and reads it.*) This concerns Nugent.

Herbert (*To Clarence, who has been deeply engrossed reading the letter he received from Ellen, and looking at a small account book.*) Has Aunt Matchem written you a sermon?

Clarence. The best I ever read—containing the kindest and most womanly—not to say absolutely motherly advice—a clear head and feeling heart ever prompted, and a generous hand ever penned. *Herbert,* look here—(*Holds up cheque.*)—What fabled good fairy ever sent a distressed mortal so precious a gift as this? This talisman calls me from despair to hope, from dishonour to honour—from poverty to independence! I can pay every shilling I owe in the world!

Herbert. I congratulate you and your creditors.

Clarence. (*Laughing.*) Thank you for both; and what is better still, set that scoundrel, Gaston Leech, at defiance, should he attempt to annoy me.

Herbert. A consummation most devoutly to be wished; but you could have done that without the assistance of that magic piece of paper.

Clarence. How so?

Herbert. There is a good fairy in buckskins watching over you, as well as one in brocade. Listen.

(*Reads letter.*)

“ HON’RED SUR,—

“ Which that swell welcher, Capting Leech, has been blowed, and bolted, whereby all bets are off, as well as him.

“ TIM ”

What do you think of “ the fly on the wall ” now?

Clarence. That he is a regular little trump. What can I do for him?

Herbert. Paint his portrait.

Clarence. I will, the first winning mount he has, and put fifty pounds into the savings bank in his name.

Herbert. All right. Hush! here are our friends.

Enter AUNT MATCHEM, MR. SMILEY, MRS. SMILEY, and LUCY NUGENT. Clarence goes up to Aunt Matchem, takes her hand affectionately and respectfully.

Clarence. My dear madam, allow ~~me~~ to say—

Aunt Matchem. Not a word! Supper is ready, and the sooner we sit down to it the better. Before we go we have one thing to do.

Herbert. What is that, my dear aunt—for such you soon will be?

Aunt Matchem. The sooner the better. Now, are you all prepared to express your honest opinions as to the fair bride's portrait?

Omnes. We are! That it is—

(After a slight pause.)

Aunt Matchem. What?

Omnes. LOVELY!

AUNT MATCHEM.

MRS. SMILEY.

MR. SMILEY.

HERBERT.

CLARENCE.

ELLEN.

LUCY.

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